



Monthly Drought Update September 1, 2015 San Luis Obispo County

Note: Information provided in this update varies by date.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

U.S. Drought Monitor Status:

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor report released August 20, 2015, indicates San Luis Obispo County remains at the **D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating**. Approximately 92% of the state remains at a level D2 – Severe Drought or worse with 46% of the state in a D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating.

San Luis Obispo County Precipitation Totals (in inches):

Sub-Region	Area / Rain Station	Average Annual Rainfall	2015-16 Water Year (July 2015-June 2016)	
			Cumulative Total	% of Total Average
North Coast	Cambria (ALERT #717)	22.0	1.38	6%
	Whale Rock Reservoir (County Site #166.1)	16.0	1.10	7%
Inland	Paso Robles (County Site #10.0)	14.1	2.82	20%
	NE Atascadero (ALERT #711)	17.0	0.83	5%
	Atascadero MWC (County Site #34.0)	17.5	1.28	7%
	Santa Margarita (ALERT #723)	24.0	0.79	3%
	Salinas Dam (County Site #94)	20.9	1.06	5%
South Coast	SLO Reservoir (ALERT #749)	24.0	1.26	5%
	Lopez Recreation Area (ALERT #707)	23.0	1.09	5%
	West of Nipomo (CIMIS #202)	14.8	1.07	7%
	Nipomo East (ALERT #728)	18.0	0.98	5%

Note: This table contains provisional data from automated gauges and has not been verified. All units reported in inches. Report generated at 10:00am on 8/17/2015.

Near-term Outlook for Precipitation:

Since August through October is a dry time of year, long-term hydrological drought is likely to continue. An El Niño (ENSO) Advisory continues in effect, with the August 13, 2015 ENSO Diagnostic Discussion indicating a 90 percent chance of El Niño conditions continuing through Northern Hemisphere winter 2015-16, and 85 percent chance it will last into early spring 2016. This El Niño is one of the strongest on record for this time of the year (mid-August). However, long-term hydrological drought is likely to continue. The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook is calling for the drought to persist or intensify throughout California and most of the far western U.S. According to some figures, 400-600% of normal precipitation will be necessary to catch up to normal. Snow levels may be higher than average this winter due to the warm ocean temperatures which may lead to less effective reservoir recharge.

Reservoir Levels (% of capacity):

Reservoir	% of Capacity	Current Acre Feet Storage
Nacimiento	23%	85,658
Whale Rock	39%	15,357
Lopez	34%	16,834
Salinas	14%	3,308

Source: www.slocountywater.org County of San Luis Obispo

STATE WATER

Status: The Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced expected water deliveries in 2015 to most customers of the State Water Project (SWP) to 20% of their requested amounts. San Luis Reservoir is currently at 21% capacity (52% of average).

Actions: The Public Works Department has released a 2015 projected delivery schedule and met with sub-contractors to discuss 2015 projected deliveries. Staff has distributed information to subcontractors showing the 20% delivery scenario and will continue to coordinate with sub-contractors as more information arises.

VULNERABLE WATER SYSTEMS**County Service Areas (CSA's):****Santa Margarita (CSA 23)**

- Drought response level remains at ALERT status.
- Primary pumping is from shallow well No. 4; water is also being pumped from deep well No. 3 to reduce needs from well No. 4. State officials have also authorized the use of shallow wells 1 & 2 should the need arise. CSA 23 wells have been used to supply firefighting efforts (along with water both the Nacimiento and Salinas Water systems). Staff continues to monitor well levels and advance the emergency connection to Atascadero.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.
- Staff is monitoring conditions for a potential status change to CRITICAL.
- The intertie with Atascadero Mutual Water Company (AMWC) has issued a notice to proceed, with work starting soon.

Shandon (CSA 16)

- Two wells currently provide all water to the Shandon community and continued to be monitored.
- Connection to the State Water Project is pending the Central Coast Water Authority approval.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

Cayucos (CSA 10A)

- Supply is available from Whale Rock and one on-site well. Staff has given a presentation to the Advisory Committee and business groups regarding conserving this supply.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

Avila Valley (CSA 12)

- Adequate supply is available from Lopez and State water "carryover" water sources for this year and next.

Chorro Valley Institutions (CMC, Animal Services, Sheriff, County Operations, Camp San Luis, Cuesta College, County Office of Education):

- 2015 State water carryover water is available and being provided.
- The existing distribution system is being evaluated to assure water losses are minimized.
- CMC is at 100% design of their water treatment plant upgrade project and will soon go out to bid.
- Discussions with City of San Luis Obispo to exchange Nacimiento for Whale Rock are being initiated if State Water is insufficient in 2016.

Non-County Operated:

- **Cambria Community Services District**
Status: Emergency San Simeon Creek Brackish Water Supply Project went online on January 20, 2015. The district is now seeking a permit to operate it permanently.
- **San Simeon Community Services District**
Status: The CSD has a new well head salinity project to increase supplies in the current prop 84 grant round.
- **Heritage Ranch Community Services District**
Status: The Nacimiento River is the only available water source for the community of Heritage Ranch. An emergency inter-tie will be funded with emergency grant funds and construction on the inter-tie is underway.
- **Rural Paso Robles residents**
Status: Continuing to identify water-trucking options and examine outreach efforts. See County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation Website for drought relief update information.

IMPACTS

Agricultural Impacts:

The recent rains of July 19-20 and warm soil temperatures resulted in germination of grasses and forbs much earlier than would occur in an average year. This was particularly apparent in Paso Robles and out a radius of 10 miles. These plants will not have sufficient soil moisture to survive, so represent a loss to the seed bank stored in the soil. Although we do not know what the final impact might be, it is likely that there are sufficient seed stores for good germination if fall precipitation is measurable and ongoing.

The University of California Cooperative Extension has been tracking drought-related contacts with agricultural clientele for the year 2015. This provides a measure of the degree of concern of the agricultural community with drought impacts. The horticulture and viticulture Advisors, Mary Bianchi, Mark Battany, Mark Gaskell, and Surendra Dara, have presented drought related information and strategies to more than 650 producers or managers through farm calls, email contacts, phone consultations, or presentations at meetings. The majority of these contacts addressed water availability and quality relative to crop production. These contacts represent a broad cross-section of the San Luis Obispo County agricultural community.

Contacts with cattle producers and rangeland managers have been less frequent in 2015. Estimates are that 60-70% of animals were sold or shipped out of the County in 2014. Many producers are waiting for rain and continuing to haul feed and water for their remaining animals. Dr. Royce Larsen's forage production project estimated that countywide production this year was 47% of average. Dr. Larsen's newsletter with range production reports and reminders to prepare for a potential wet winter, reached 504 producers, managers and technical service providers.

Agricultural Assistance - Update from the USDA Farm Service Agency

According to staff at the USDA Farm Service Agency, the following programs are active in providing assistance. The programs are briefly summarized as follows:

LFP – Livestock Forage Disaster Program: provides payments for grazing losses. Because San Luis Obispo County continues in the D4 drought category, current eligibility is for 5 months of payments. Deadline to file is January 30, 2016 for 2015 payments.

ELAP – Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program: provides relief to producers who haul water to livestock. Deadline to file is September 1, 2015.

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program (NRCS): provides funds for land conservation planning and implementation of conservation practices. This program provides cost-share funding through USDA – NRCS. Applications and approvals are ongoing.

NAP – Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program: provides cash payments to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or planting did not occur due to natural disasters. Producers who are insured through this program should file a notice of loss as soon as possible and are required to file within 15 days of the loss being apparent to be eligible for benefits.

Tree Assistance Program – covering Red Blotch Disease in vineyards and losses due to drought conditions if growers rehabilitate or replant orchards.

For information about the assistance programs, contact the USDA Farm Service Agency:

Templeton: (805) 434-0398 Ext 2.

Santa Maria: (805) 928-9269

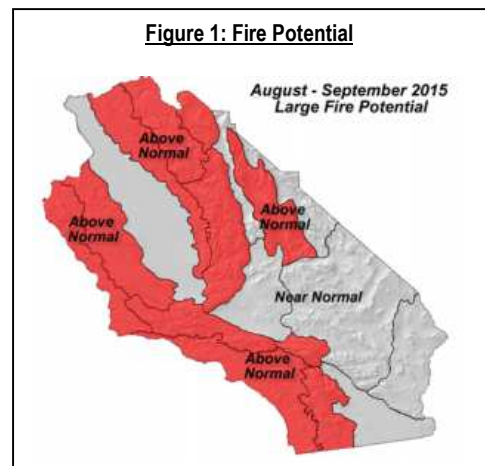
Fire Danger:

Fire Danger

In 2015, CAL FIRE has responded to over **4,549** fires across the State, burning **144,253** acres in State Responsibility Area. This level of fire activity is comparable to the five year average (same interval) of 3,027 fires and 61,348 acres burned. These statistics do not include fires on Federal jurisdiction.

The drought has led to historically dry conditions increasing fire danger, as evident from the Cuesta Fire. As of August 23, the Cuesta Fire remained at 3,500 acres burned and 75 percent containment. In addition, widespread tree mortality is increasing fire danger. The County Planning and Building Department continues to work to provide relief from hazard tree permitting requirements in Cambria to facilitate tree removal on the high number of affected parcels.

Long term drought will keep significant fire potential above normal in San Luis Obispo County. Expect very active fire behavior during warm and sunny periods. Extreme fire behavior may occur during windy and dry occasions



A Countywide Burn Ban was proclaimed on June 19, 2015. The burn ban eliminates all burning within CAL FIRE jurisdiction except for campfires at approved campgrounds.

Live Fuel Moisture (LFM)

(LFM is the moisture content of live vegetation expressed as a percentage of the oven-dry weight.)

LFM values in the County peaked much earlier than usual in 2015 and are continuing to trend downward with values below historic lows and approaching the critical level of 60. LFM values area-wide will likely reach critical (60%) levels 2 -3 months earlier than normal.

Overall, frequent dry weather patterns and the presence of low live and dead fuel moistures have produced fuel conditions that are considered available for burning. The daily decrease in LFM causes a corresponding increase in the fire danger.

Dead Fuel Moisture

(The moisture content of dead organic fuels is another important component of the relative fire danger. As with LFM above, dead fuel moisture levels are a good indicator of how likely fuels are to ignite and how intensely they will burn. 100-hr fuel refers to vegetation between 1 and 3 inches in diameter and 1000-hr fuel is 3-6 inches. When the fuel moisture content is low, fires start easily and will spread rapidly.)

Dead fuel moisture values are approaching minimum values indicating fires will start easily and spread rapidly.

Temperatures/Relative Humidity (RH)

(When combined with other factors influencing the fire environment such as wind, steep topography, and low fuel moisture levels, hot temperatures and low RH can significantly increase the fire danger by increasing fire initiation, spread rates, burning intensity, and difficulty of control.)

Longer days and warm and dry weather has steadily increased the fire danger and prompted an early start to the 2015 fire season.

Energy Release Component (ERC)

Attachment 1

(ERC is an index related to how hot a fire could burn. It is directly related to the 24-hour, potential worst case, total available energy (BTUs) at the head of a fire. The ERC can serve as a good characterization of fire season as it tracks seasonal fire danger trends well. ERC has low variability, and is the best fire danger component for indicating the effects of intermediate to long-term drying on fire behavior.)

Warmer weather has caused dead fuel moistures to dry out increasing ERC values to above average.

Forest and Range Impacts

Widespread tree mortality is plainly evident throughout the County. All tree species have been adversely affected by the drought. Thousands of coast live oaks of all sizes in all areas and at all elevations have died. The area most severely impacted is the Cambria Monterey Pine Forest (CMPF). Already one of the most endangered native forests in the world, the CMPF has been further devastated by the drought. In addition to the major impacts to forest health, the resulting fire hazard has increased to the point where catastrophic stand-replacing fire is very likely. Hundreds of large dead hazard trees are poised to fall on homes, vehicles, and vital infrastructure. Solutions are available including dead tree removal, biomass removal, cogeneration, thinning, prescribed burning, tree planting, and invasive weed control. Implementing worthwhile solutions is extraordinarily challenging and requires a community based effort involving multi-agency cooperation.

The County Planning and Building Department is working to provide relief from hazard tree permitting requirements in Cambria to facilitate tree removal on the high number of affected parcels.

Economic:

In an effort to coordinate local and state response to drought impacts the following surveys are being utilized by the County:

Drought Business Impact Survey

The San Luis Obispo County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is gathering information on local drought-related job impacts. This is part of a statewide survey by the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) as part of an ongoing online survey to inform the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force of the drought's ripple effects. The WIB's Drought Business Impact survey is available at <http://sloworkforce.com/drought-survey/>. Local Workforce Investment Boards, workforce partners, and other local workforce entities are encouraged to complete the survey regularly to keep the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force up to date on the local area. The WIB is conducting outreach to chambers of commerce and other business services agencies for assistance in outreach to businesses and employers regarding the drought survey. Though the WIB is hearing that there are impacts, the county does not have any "reportable" impacts due to the State's requirements for reporting (i.e. specific business name, address, etc.).

Domestic Water Issues-Intake Form

The Governor's Drought Task Force created an online intake form for local, state, or tribal and federal agencies to document domestic water issues. The information is intended to inform and coordinate state response and mitigate drought impacts. Data collected is considered confidential and access is restricted. Individuals with domestic water issues are encouraged to contact County Environmental Health at (805) 781-5544.

STATE & FEDERAL KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH

\$30 Million in Rebates to Replace Old Toilets and Turf:

On August 12, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced two new rebate programs to encourage Californians to reduce water usage. The "turf and toilet" rebate programs will reduce water use in homes by replacing more than 10 million square-feet of lawn and upgrading more than 60,000 water-wasting toilets. The rebate programs provide a \$100 consumer rebate to replace one old toilet per household and up to \$2 per square foot for lawn replacement. Californians can visit SaveOurWaterRebates.com to apply for the rebates.

COUNTY DROUGHT TASK FORCE KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH

County Office of Emergency Services:

Attachment 1

San Luis Obispo County OES continues to coordinate with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to provide updates on the drought situation, respond to specific information requests to Cal OES, and coordinate local emergency needs. In addition, County OES continues to gather local situation status information and drought costs throughout the county in order to send the information to Cal OES.

Emergency Food Aid

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided boxes of food to the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo for households impacted by the drought. Call the Food Bank for more information and to ensure Drought Food Assistance is still available: (805) 238-4664 or www.slofoodbank.org.

Emergency Actions:

No new emergency actions have been taken specific to the drought in this reporting period.

County Facilities Usage & Conservation Actions:

The county has taken the following actions:

- Fixture Replacement: To date, staff has retrofitted 44 buildings with low-flow fixtures, saving an estimated 4,500 gallons per week.
- Leak Repair: Staff continues to identify and repair leaks to minimize water loss.
- Water Conservation: The Energy & Water Manager Services consultant contractor is coordinating with water purveyors to understand water reduction requirements for County facilities. Outreach and coordination will start with City of San Luis Obispo and Nipomo CSD, the purveyors with the most water accounts and usage for County Parks.
- Water Audit: The Energy & Water Manager Services consultant contractor provided a report showing high water use facilities. The next step will be to perform a water audit of high use facilities. The County received proposals for a water audit of the County Jail (top water using facility). The next step is to award task order for water audit.
- County Standards for Construction Contracts: Staff is reviewing and updating County standards for plumbing fixtures, to include more specific language for lower water usage fixtures in facility construction contracts and purchase orders.
- County Airport: As previously reported, County Airport fire hydrants must be flushed periodically to maintain safe water for drinking due to chlorine levels. The Airport is making the water from hydrant flushing available for agricultural operations, construction, or other purposes. Please contact the Airport at (805) 781-5205 if interested in using this free water.

Drought Contingency Planning:

The Public Health Department, the Public Works Department, and CAL FIRE/County Fire continue to develop plans to ensure there is adequate supply of water for firefighting and domestic water use in the event that a community does not have enough water. Water availability information from small and large public water systems has been categorized into three categories; Watch, Vulnerable, and Critical. The information has been placed into a GIS mapping layer for contingency planning.

County Public Outreach Actions:

Information regarding current and upcoming drought relief programs for rural homeowners has been placed on the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage. Rural Development, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), delivers a number of programs to help improve the quality of life in rural communities throughout the nation. These programs may also help rural communities, businesses and individuals impacted by California's ongoing drought conditions. For additional resources and information on applying for any of these programs, please visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca> or the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage at http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm.

In an effort to raise awareness about water supply issues the County continues to examine multiple channels of communication for water conservation outreach efforts. Check out our water-saving tips, shareable water saving images, and customized Tweets and Facebook posts just for you to share and help us continue the SLO County culture of conservation at the following link: http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update/water-conservation.htm

To report drought-related concerns or for water conservations questions, call the County Water Conservation and Drought Hotline at (805) 781-4466.

DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

County of San Luis Obispo Drought Conditions and Water Conservation
(http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm)

State's Water Conservation Campaign; Save our Water
(www.saveourh2o.org)

California's Drought Information Clearinghouse; Drought.CA.Gov
(<http://ca.gov/drought/>)

California Department of Food and Agriculture; Drought information
(www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought/)

California Department of Water Resources; Current Water Conditions
(www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/)

California State Water Resources Control Board; Water Rights, Drought Info and Actions
(www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml)

California Department of Public Health; Drinking Water CDPH Drinking Water Program
(www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/dwp.aspx)

USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information; USDA Programs
(http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DISASTER_ASSISTANCE)

UC Cooperative Extension Drought Information Resources; Drought Information Resources
(http://cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/Drought_Information/)

